

April 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Leader Schumer:

As national, state, and local advocates we are writing to urge Congress to ensure that during the coronavirus pandemic, all benefits, programs, services and assistance provided through COVID-19 response legislation are open to all persons who are eligible and in need, free from discrimination.

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to profoundly impact the lives of all Americans, communities of color, women, and LGBTQ+ people will be disproportionately affected. In Michigan African Americans make up 35% of coronavirus cases, and 40% of deaths, despite representing only 14% of Michigan's population; Illinois and North Carolina show similar trendsⁱ. Evidence that Asian-Americans are increasingly subject to racist discrimination amid the coronavirus is mountingⁱⁱ. There is overwhelming evidence that Black women are already subject to discrimination in the provision of health careⁱⁱⁱ. Given that 18% of Latinxs are uninsured compared to around 5% of non-Hispanic Whites, and uninsurance rates were on the rise for Latinx children prior to the start of this pandemic the crisis will have a devastating effect on this population^{iv}. 1/3 of U.S. households have people with disabilities and people with disabilities are some of the most vulnerable to severe health problems caused by the novel coronavirus^v - and to discriminatory rationing of care policies^{vi}. LGBTQ people have long faced discrimination in the health care system which has negatively impacted their health outcomes and has additionally made them wary of accessing services in the first place^{vii}. Women are overrepresented in many frontline jobs yet are paid less than men for the same work; for example, women grocery store cashiers earn on average just 65 cents for every man's dollar^{viii}. We must not exacerbate existing health and economic inequities by allowing qualified individuals to be turned away from federally funded services.

Thus, we urge Congress to include provisions in future COVID-19 response legislation to ensure that no eligible person in need is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination in the administration of programs and services funded by federal COVID-19 response legislation based on non-merit factors such as (but not limited to) age, disability, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, and pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions), race, color, national origin, immigration status, or religion; and to ensure that fund recipients treat as valid all marriages that are valid under federal law.

Denying eligible people needed COVID-19 response services weakens public health and the economy. We call on Congress to prevent such exclusions by including specific language prohibiting discrimination in all COVID-19 response bills.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

A Better Balance
Advocates for Youth
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Atheists
American Civil Liberties Union
American Council of the Blind
Americans for Financial Reform
Americans United for Separation of Church & State
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Athlete Ally
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJC)
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Black and Pink
Catholics for Choice
Center for American Progress
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Inquiry
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Center for Public Representation
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Rights
Clearinghouse of Women's Issues
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Coalition on Human Needs
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)
Disciples Justice Action Network
Faith in Public Life
Family Equality
FORGE, Inc.
Foster Care to Success

Futures Without Violence
Gay Parent Magazine
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
GLSEN
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights Campaign
Impact Fund
Indivisible
Interfaith Alliance
International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA)
Japanese American Citizens League
Jewish Women International
Justice for Migrant Women
Justice in Aging
Juvenile Law Center
Lambda Legal
Legal Aid at Work
Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund
MALDEF
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Men Having Babies
Modern Military Association of America
MomsRising
Movement Advancement Project
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
NASTAD
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association of the Deaf
National Center for Civil and Human Rights LGBTQ Institute
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Center for Youth Law
National Center on Adoption and Permanency
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council on Aging

National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Equality Action Team
National Health Law Program
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice
National LGBT Cancer Network
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
National Trans Bar Association
National Women's Law Center
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA)
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
North American Council on Adoptable Children
Not Dead Yet
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates
Out & Equal Workplace Advocates
People for the American Way
PFLAG National
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Polygon Education Fund
Positive Women's Network-USA
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
PowerOn, a program of LGBT Technology Institute
Pride at Work
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Raise A Child
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
SAGE: Advocacy and Services for LGBT Elders
Secular Coalition for America
Secular Policy Institute
SEIU International Lavender Caucus
SOJOURN
SPLC Action Fund
Swipe Out Hunger
The AIDS Institute
The Forum for Youth Investment
The Global Justice Institute
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Sikh Coalition
The Trevor Project
Transgender Law Center

Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund
Treatment Action Group
True Colors United
Ujima Inc.: The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Voices for Progress
Whitman-Walker Health and Whitman-Walker Institute
YWCA USA
ZAMI NOBLA: National Organization of Black Lesbians on Aging

State and Local Organizations:

AIDS Foundation of Chicago
AJL Consulting
Atlanta Pride Committee
Auburn Seminary
Black Women's Blueprint
California LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network
Chinese-American Planning Council
embrella. Embracing and Empowering Families
Empire Justice Center
Equality California
Equality Florida
Equality Illinois
EqualityMaine
Equality North Carolina
Equality Ohio
Fenway Health
Freedom Overground
Gender Justice
Georgia Equality
GLAA
Housing Choice Partners
JustUs Health
Juxtaposed Center for Transformation, Inc
Latino LinQ
Legal Voice
LGBT Bar Association of New York
Los Angeles LGBT Center
Mazzoni Center
Oasis Legal Services
OCTOPUS LLC (Organizing Communities Transgender Outreach Promoting United Support)
One Colorado

OUT Georgia Business Alliance
OutFront Minnesota
Peter Cicchino Youth Project, Urban Justice Center
Peoria Proud
Public Justice Center
QC Pride
Resolve New England
Resource Center
RESULTS DC
Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition
Silver State Equality-Nevada
Southern Arizona Gender Alliance
The Center on Colfax
The NYC Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center
The NW Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian, and Gay Survivors of Abuse
Trans Housing Atlanta Program, Inc.
Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico
Uniting Pride of Champaign County
Union Theological Seminary
Walker
Witness to Mass Incarceration

ⁱ Julian Kossoff, *The Coronavirus Seems to Kill Disproportionally African Americans, According to the Few States Providing Data on the Race of Victims* NEWS.YAHOO.COM (Apr. 6, 2020) <https://news.yahoo.com/coronavirus-seems-disproportionately-kill-african-141931540> (last visited Apr. 7, 2020)

ⁱⁱ Alexandra Kelley, *Report Highlights Emerging Trends of Asian American Discrimination amid Coronavirus Pandemic* THEHILL.COM (Apr. 2, 2020), <https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/490803-report-highlights-emerging-trends-of-asian-american> (last visited Apr. 7, 2020).

ⁱⁱⁱ Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, *How Discrimination can Harm Black Women's Health* HSPH.HARVARD.EDU (2018) <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/discrimination-black-womens-health/> (last visited Apr. 7, 2020)

^{iv} Kelly Whitener et al., *Decade of Success for Latino Children's Health Now in Jeopardy* CCF.GEORGETOWN.EDU (Mar. 10, 2020) <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2020/03/10/decade-of-success-for-latino-childrens-health-now-in-jeopardy/> (last visited Apr. 7, 2020)

^v Rebecca Cokley, *Coronavirus Proposals Leave the Disability Community Behind* AMERICANPROGRESS.COM (Mar. 27, 2020) <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/disability/news/2020/03/27/482378/coronavirus-proposals-leave-disability-community-behind/> (last visited Apr. 7, 2020)

^{vi} Amy Silverman, *People With Intellectual Disabilities May Be Denied Lifesaving Care Under These Plans as Coronavirus Spreads* PROPUBLICA.ORG (Mar. 27, 2020) <https://www.propublica.org/article/people-with-intellectual-disabilities-may-be-denied-lifesaving-care-under-these-plans-as-coronavirus-spreads> (last visited Apr. 7, 2020)

^{vii} Shabab Ahmed Mirza et al., *Discrimination Prevents LGBTQ People from Accessing Health Care* AMERICANPROGRESS.COM (Jan. 18, 2018), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbtq-rights/news/2018/01/18/445130/discrimination-prevents-lgbtq-people-accessing-health-care/> (last visited Apr. 7, 2020).

^{viii} Jasmine Tucker, *Women Experience a Wage Gap in Nearly Every Occupation* NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER
NWLC.ORG (Apr. 2018) <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Wage-Gap-Fact-Sheet-Occupation.pdf> (last visited Apr. 13, 2020)